

KEITH ELLISON
5TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

2263 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4755

2100 PLYMOUTH AVENUE NORTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55411
(612) 522-1212

ellison.house.gov
TWITTER: @keithellison



CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS AND
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND
CONSUMER CREDIT

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 4, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

I am writing to bring to your attention to a recent *ProPublica* and *Frontline PBS* investigation completed as part of their "Documenting Hate" project, which found evidence that active duty military members are connected to at least one hate group. More specifically, *ProPublica* and *Frontline* identified three Atomawaffen members or associates who are currently employed by the Army or Navy.

The involvement of service members in white supremacist organizations or other hate groups is cause for significant concern, particularly given their combat and weapons training. Although the *ProPublica* and *Frontline* investigation focused particular attention on the actions of a single Marine allegedly involved in the violent and tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia last summer, I am concerned these actions may be indicative of a broader problem within the military.

Although Department of Defense guidance clearly prohibits discrimination and extremist behavior, it appears that some service members are still able to join and actively participate in extremist organizations. Disturbingly, the investigation also highlighted that at least some volunteers with seemingly credible ties to the white supremacist movement are being allowed to enter the military. While the *ProPublica* and *Frontline* investigation appeared limited to Atomawaffen, some evidence suggests that the problem may be more widespread. Nearly 25 percent of respondents to a September 2017 Military Times survey of over 1,100 active duty troops reported that they had seen examples of white nationalism among their fellow service members. Over 40 percent of non-white service members surveyed said that they had personally experienced white nationalism in the military.

I ask that you conduct investigations into the actions of the service members identified by *ProPublica* and *Frontline*. I also request information on the number of reports of extremist activity by service members over the past five years, the number of full investigations conducted, and the number of troops that were disciplined for extremist actions or ties. In addition, I seek information on the steps currently being taken to screen recruits for extremist ties. I request that you send your responses by May 21, 2018.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Mac Thornberry, Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member